AROUND ROCHESTER

Topfree 7 want 'Equality Day'

Members and supporters of the Topfree Seven, who gained nationwide attention in 1986 when they were arrested for baring their chests at Cobbs Hill Park, are expected to seek support from the Monroe County legislators at their meeting tonight.

The Coalition for Topfree Equality is asking the legislature to designate June 21 Topfree Equality Day in Monroe County. Members say they will ask the same of City Council at its June 14 meeting.

But issuing the proclamation — a matter for the Democratic President Kevin B. Murray — has become a sticky political issue.

The equality day has no support from Republican Party leaders. And while Democratic legislators say they support the idea, they are not willing to risk political capital by supporting the coalition's plan.

"No legislator has requested it and no legislator has said they will be put their name on it," said Murray of Rochester.

The coalition is lobbying legislators in an effort to ultimately change state criminal laws on public exposure, which prohibits women from showing their breasts in public.

City Court Judge Herman J. Walz ruled that the women arrested in 1986 were within their legal rights because they were exercising their First Amendment rights in a protest. Last year, the group held a topfree picnic, but no one was arrested.

The coalition has scheduled a public education program featuring a movie about what they say is sexist treatment of women's bodies in some advertising. The meeting is scheduled for 8 p.m. June 21 at the City School District's central office.

A "participatory topfree picnic," similar to one the group held last year, is scheduled for June 25 at Genesee Valley Park.

"We want it to be a nice picnic," said Morley Schloss, whose wife is one the Topfree Seven, "not have a bunch of beer-drinking bozos standing around,"

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BRIEFLY

Topfree activists seek 'equality day'

Activists who believe women should be allowed to bare their breasts in public may have trouble convincing Rochester and Monroe County officials to designate June 21 as Topfree Equality Day.

County Executive Thomas R. Frey said he would not grant the request. "I think that what they're looking for is state legislation," he said.

Rochester Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr. yesterday would not comment on the request, said Robert Meyer, an aide to Ryan.

The Coalition for Topfree Equality has written to area politicians asking for the designated day, which is the two-year anniversary of the arrest of the so-called Topfree Seven, who took off their shirts in Cobbs Hill Park.

The women's case gained national attention when it went to trial in City Court. Judge Herman Walz dismissed the indecent exposure charges against them, saying they had a right to bare their breasts as a way to protest the law.

Last year on the anniversary of the arrest, about 20 women took their shirts off in Genesee Valley Park, but they attracted little attention.

This year the coalition has scheduled an anniversary educational presentation about the topfree cause at 8 p.m., June 21 at the City School District's central offices, 131 W. Broad St.

They also are planning a topfree picnic on June 25, though details will not be released until that day.